



16721
NMC-4 Policy LTR 6-99
March 29, 1999

From: Commanding Officer
To: Distribution

Subj: QUALIFICATION AS A LIFEBOATMAN

Ref: (a) Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations (46 CFR), Section 12.10
(b) International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and
Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW), Regulation VI/2

1. This policy letter contains guidance for applying the regulations and the STCW to applicants for an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN. Reference (a) contains the Federal regulatory requirements for this qualification. The equivalent qualification under the STCW is "Proficiency in survival craft and rescue boats other than fast rescue boats" (PSC). The requirements for certification in this proficiency are found in reference (b). The STCW also contains provisions for qualification in the use of fast rescue craft that will be addressed in future policy guidance.
2. Qualification as LIFEBOATMAN is an integral part of the qualifications for an endorsement as ABLE SEAMAN-UNLIMITED, -LIMITED, or -SPECIAL. A mariner who is seeking one of these endorsements must have the equivalent qualification of LIFEBOATMAN. The endorsement LIFEBOATMAN-RESTRICTED SERVICE, set forth in paragraph four, does not meet the requirements for qualification as an ABLE SEAMAN-UNLIMITED, -LIMITED, or -SPECIAL that would be valid for service on a seagoing vessel of 200 GRT or more. A mariner who has an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN-RESTRICTED SERVICE and then applies for an ABLE SEAMAN's endorsement would be limited to service as an able seaman on vessels plying the Great Lakes, inland waters, or on small seagoing vessels of not more than 200 GRT.
3. Mariners who began the service or training before 1 August 1998 that leads to an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN may continue to be evaluated for that rating in accordance with reference (a). Qualification as a LIFEBOATMAN under these provisions includes qualification under the STCW for the PSC endorsement provided that the mariner is issued the LIFEBOATMAN endorsement before 1 February 2002. On that date, this option will become invalid and the requirements of paragraph four will apply. Enclosure (1) is a fact sheet setting forth policy for issuance of this endorsement.
4. Mariners who began the service or training on or after 1 August 1998 have two options available. If they wish to serve on a seagoing vessel of 200 or more gross register tons (GRT)

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(equal to 500 or more gross tons [GT] as measured under the International Tonnage Convention) they must enroll in a training program approved as meeting the STCW's requirements. Successful completion of the program will lead to issuance of the STCW form with the PSC qualification and the LIFEBOATMAN endorsement. Enclosure (2) is a fact sheet setting forth policy for the issuance of this qualification. The second option applies to mariners who wish to serve as a LIFEBOATMAN on Great Lakes or inland vessels (LIFEBOATMAN - RESTRICTED SERVICE). They may continue to meet the requirements of reference (a). Enclosure (3) is a fact sheet that sets forth policy for this endorsement.

5. A mariner who holds an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN that was issued before 1 August 1998, may continue to hold that endorsement without further training or assessment in the skills that apply to the rating. However, such a mariner must provide proof of competency in the four elements of basic safety training before being employed on a seagoing vessel or being issued an STCW-95 form.

W. C. BENNETT
By direction

Encl: (1) Qualification as a LIFEBOATMAN
(2) Certification as proficient in the use of survival craft and rescue boats
(3) Qualification as a LIFEBOATMAN-RESTRICTED for inland, Great Lakes, and limited ocean service

Copy: All District Commanders (m)
Commandant (G-MSO)
All COs MSOs
All Activity Commanders
All RECs

QUALIFICATION FOR AN ENDORSEMENT AS

LIFEBOATMAN

1. This enclosure applies only to a mariner who began the sea service or training before August 1, 1998, that leads to an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN. A certificate of discharge or letter from a vessel's owner, operator, master or chief mate will be accepted as proof of such service. The policies set forth in this enclosure will be void after 31 January 2002. After that date, all applicants for an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN that is valid for service on all seagoing vessels must comply with the requirements set forth in enclosure (2).
2. An applicant must meet the requirements of Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 12.10 which requires a written examination as well as a demonstration of the professional knowledge and skill to raise and lower a lifeboat, and the ability to handle it under oars and sail. A mariner may elect to attend a Coast Guard approved course that substitutes for the written examination, the practical demonstrations of skills, or both. The credit allowed for the course will be detailed in the course's approval letter and set forth on the course completion certificate.
3. A mariner who seeks an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN under this enclosure must have their competency in the required practical skills assessed:
 - a. by a master of a vessel that is suitably equipped;
 - b. at an approved or accepted course; or
 - c. at the Regional Examination Center if is equipped with a lifeboat model.
4. An applicant for an endorsement of ABLE SEAMAN-UNLIMITED, -LIMITED, or -SPECIAL must qualify as a LIFEBOATMAN as part of the qualification process. Therefore, the policies in this enclosure also apply to these applicants who started the service or training before 1 August 1998.
5. A mariner who meets the requirements for the endorsement of LIFEBOATMAN on a merchant mariner's document in accordance with the above guidance will be issued the appropriate STCW form as set forth in NVIC 8-97.

QUALIFICATION AS PROFICIENT IN THE
USE OF SURVIVAL CRAFT AND RESCUE BOATS

1. This enclosure applies:
 - a) To a mariner who began the sea service or training on or after 1 August 1998, that leads to an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN that is valid for service on any seagoing vessel, and,
 - b) After 1 February 2002, to all mariners who apply for an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN valid for seagoing service on any vessel.
2. A mariner must complete a Coast Guard approved training program that meets the STCW's requirements to qualify for the LIFEBOATMAN endorsement. The Coast Guard will not administer a written test nor will they conduct the practical skill assessments for a mariner who must comply with the requirements of this enclosure.
3. The course completion certificate that serves as evidence of completing an approved or accepted course should state that completion of the course meets the STCW's requirements. These are set forth in reference (b) and in the STCW Code A, Section A-VI/2. If there are any questions about whether or not the course meets these requirements, contact the National Maritime Center (NMC-4B) (703-235-0018). Course providers should not be accepting candidates who started their service or training after 31 July 1998 unless the course is approved as stated above.
4. A mariner who meets the requirements of this enclosure and the requirements of the STCW will qualify for the endorsement of LIFEBOATMAN on a merchant mariner's document and for the appropriate STCW form with the PSC entry in accordance with NVIC 8-97.
5. An applicant for an endorsement of ABLE SEAMAN-UNLIMITED, -LIMITED, OR - SPECIAL must qualify as a LIFEBOATMAN as part of the qualification process. Therefore, the applicability requirements set forth in paragraph one apply to these applicants if they are seeking an endorsement as ABLE SEAMAN that is valid for service on all seagoing vessels.

QUALIFICATION AS A LIFEBOATMAN-RESTRICTED SERVICE

VALID FOR SERVICE ON THE GREAT LAKES AND INLAND WATERS,

AND FOR LIMITED SEAGOING SERVICE

1. The requirements set forth in this enclosure apply to a mariner who wishes to qualify for an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN-RESTRICTED SERVICE that is valid only for service on vessels on the Great Lakes and inland waters, and on seagoing vessels of less than 200 GRT. Qualification as a LIFEBOATMAN is an integral part of qualifying for an endorsement as an ABLE SEAMAN-UNLIMITED, -LIMITED, AND -SPECIAL. A mariner who is issued an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN-RESTRICTED SERVICE in accordance with this enclosure cannot use that endorsement to qualify for an endorsement as ABLE SEAMAN valid for unlimited seagoing service.
2. A mariner who seeks an endorsement as LIFEBOATMAN-RESTRICTED SERVICE under this enclosure must pass either the Coast Guard examination or may successfully complete an approved or accepted course that substitutes for the examination. The mariner must have their competency in the required practical skills assessed:
 - a. by a master of a vessel that is suitably equipped;
 - b. at an approved or accepted course; or
 - c. at the Regional Examination Center if is equipped with a lifeboat model.
3. A mariner who qualifies as a LIFEBOATMAN-RESTRICTED SERVICE or subsequently as an ABLE SEAMAN under the provisions of this enclosure, may find it difficult to qualify for the STCW endorsement if it is later needed. To do so, a mariner would be required to complete an approved training program as set forth in enclosure (2). The RECs should advise mariners who elect to use the provisions of this enclosure that the endorsement will be limited in scope. This endorsement may severely limit career development and reduce employment opportunities.
4. The endorsements placed on a merchant mariner's document that are issued under the above policy shall read:
 - a. Lifeboatman-restricted service;
 - b. Able seaman-unlimited (restricted service);
 - c. Able seaman-limited (restricted service); or
 - d. Able seaman-special (restricted service)

ENCLOSURE (3)